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New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Olav Kjorven, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Mr. Kjorven (Norway): This special session of the General Assembly has been convened to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. It is a unique opportunity for the international community to remember and to recommit itself to the founding principles and ideas on which the United Nations is based.

The Nazi concentration and extermination camps were part of a scheme to annihilate the Jews, and also the Roma people and others deemed undesirable due to ethnic origin, religious beliefs or for other reasons. We are paying tribute to the memory of the victims who perished, and expressing our respect for and solidarity with the survivors, whether they are in Israel, which rose from the ashes and the bones of the Holocaust, or in other lands.

After half a century, the horrors of the concentration camps are still close enough in time for survivors to be able to bear witness to what they experienced. Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau and Sachsenhausen are names that evoke images of horror and human degradation. They are a call for us to do our utmost to prevent this from happening again.

The United Nations was founded at the end of the Second World War — a war during which genocide was committed on a massive scale. Its prime objective was to prevent such a conflict from ever happening again. Three years later, the General Assembly adopted a convention under which States accepted the obligation to prevent genocide and to punish that most heinous of crimes.

In his speech to the Stockholm International Forum on the prevention of genocide, in January 2004, the Secretary-General said:

> "There can be no more important issue, and no more binding obligation, than preventing genocide. Indeed this may be considered one of the original purposes of the United Nations".

It is important to remember, reflect on and learn from what happened 60 years ago. In Norway, as in other countries, the aim of the occupying Nazi regime was to completely destroy the Jewish community. Very few of those who were arrested and deported — often with active help from Norwegians — ever returned, and a community and a rich cultural heritage were lost. Too few Norwegians tried to aid the persecuted or to help them to escape.

We need to look at ourselves — at the racism, the discrimination and the anti-Semitism in our own countries. We need to look at our educational systems

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and make new generations aware of what happened in the past so as to prevent it from happening in the future. The Declaration on the Holocaust adopted by the Stockholm International Forum in 2000 was a milestone. It committed us to promoting education about the Holocaust in our schools and communities, and to creating awareness in society as a whole.

In Norway it has become increasingly common for Norwegian school classes to visit former extermination and concentration camps in Germany and Poland, such as Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbruck. In 2001, the Centre for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Norway was established as a national institution in the field of Holocaust research, documentation, information and education. The Centre was part of the restitution by the Norwegian Government for the economic losses and the suffering of the Norwegian Jews during the Second World War.

The Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, which consists of representatives of Governments and educational and research institutions, plays an important role in raising international awareness in this field.

But as important as this is, nothing can compensate for lack of determination by us, the United Nations, in doing our utmost to stop ongoing tragedies and prevent future crimes against humanity. To this cause we must recommit ourselves today.

I would like to conclude by quoting from the Declaration on the Holocaust:

> "Our commitment must be to remember the victims who perished, respect the survivors still with us, and reaffirm humanity's common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Franz Morak, State Secretary, Office of the Federal Chancellor of Austria.

Mr. Morak (Austria): Elie Wiesel reminded us that we must speak out so that the world listens, and that we must speak out so that the world learns. Sixty years ago, the victims of Auschwitz were waiting in vain for the world to speak out. That must never happen again.

When Allied troops entered the gates of Auschwitz and other death camps, the world was shocked by the atrocities that came to light. Mankind's understanding of history and of the degree of evil that human beings are capable of has never been the same since. Since then, 27 January — the day of the liberation of the concentration camp — has been a day of commemoration and reminder. Auschwitz has become a symbol for the Holocaust, and many nations commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz with a special Holocaust remembrance day.

This commemorative special session of the General Assembly of the world Organization that was founded to prevent the recurrence of such monumental crimes is of particular importance. Austria actively supported the holding of this special session. We thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to make it possible.

Standing here as the representative of Austria, I feel two emotions — the agony of knowing that our country lost so many of its Jewish citizens to the Holocaust, and the pain of realizing that far too many Austrians took part in that greatest of all crimes. More than 65,000 Austrian Jews were killed by the National Socialist regime. They were deported to places of unspeakable horror, where, we must admit, some of their neighbours might have marched them into gas chambers, lined them up against execution pits or starved them in ghettos.

Auschwitz stands for the destruction of all human values that mankind took pride in. The killing of 1.35 million Jews, 20,000 Sinti and Roma and 100,000 other inmates, persecuted by the National Socialist regime on racial and political grounds, or simply for being different, represents a break with civilization itself.

The commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation demonstrates that Auschwitz has its importance not only for remembrance in European countries but also as a place of universal remembrance. Today it stands, on a global scale, for the disastrous consequences of tyranny and contempt for the value and the dignity of the individual human being.

Memorials at places where the most heinous crimes of the Nazi regime were committed help us to realize the dimensions of the events and to connect the inconceivable number of victims of the Nazi genocide with the fate of individual persons.

Memorials are important, but, after all, they remain where they are. Education is a far more powerful tool. Education reaches into every school and every home. Our young people, representing our own future, must be taught that no country, no society, can achieve any degree of progress or development without respect for human rights and the dignity of the individual. That is the lesson and the legacy that the memory of Auschwitz is handing down from generation to generation. That is also why Austria is an active member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. Governments comprising the Task Force have committed themselves to the implementation of national policies and programmes in support of Holocaust education, remembrance and research.

Austria successfully initiated national programmes, for instance, the "Never Forget" programme, which provides for lecture visits by Holocaust survivors, and a programme for teachers entitled "National Socialism and the Holocaust". More than 15,000 Austrian students participated in the "Letter to the Stars" project, in which students, together with survivors or their descendants, researched the individual life stories of Holocaust victims.

Auschwitz is a historical site of global relevance, and it has its specific importance for each nation. For Austria, it is the commemoration of the victims of National Socialism and the Holocaust, the commemoration of Jews, Roma and Sinti, the victims of eutnanasia, homosexuals and the opponents of the National Socialism regime.

It took Austria a long time to grasp the complexities of its own history and to understand that Austria, which ceased to exist as an independent country after the Anschluss, was not just a victim of the Nazi regime but that Austrians were also among the perpetrators and that many supported or at least acquiesced to the measures of persecution. For that reason, Austria acknowledges its share of moral responsibility. For too long, we have all too voluntarily accepted the statement in the declaration adopted by the Allies in Moscow in 1943, which declared Austria to be the first free country to fall victim to Hitlerite aggression, and have neglected the fact that the same declaration reminded Austria that it has a responsibility that it cannot evade for participating in the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany.

The Nazi regime not only committed crimes against humanity on a scale unprecedented in the history of human civilization, it was also responsible for the greatest organized robbery of all times. Only in the last few years did we begin to understand the enormity of the material losses that the victims of Nazi persecution had to suffer.

After the war, Austria made serious restitution and compensation efforts, and much was actually accomplished. Only after many decades did we come to realize that not everything had been done and that there were gaps and deficiencies in our restitution and compensation efforts. To remedy that situation, the Austrian Government began comprehensive efforts to that effect, and we trust that those efforts, supported by all political parties and Austrian society at large, will bring at least some measure of justice to the victims of National Socialism, although they came late — too late for so many.

If we speak of moral responsibility with regard to the past, it is also incumbent upon us to draw the right lessons from the past and to address the continuing scourge of anti-Semitism. Austria, joining international efforts, is conscious of its responsibility and is undertaking a broad spectrum of measures to fight anti-Semitism, xenophobia and other forms of racism and intolerance at all levels.

Commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we are made aware of what we lost and what was destroyed, and of the benchmark nature of what we are doing now and what we must do to preserve the legacy of the millions killed in Auschwitz and elsewhere by an inhumane regime and to create a more just and more democratic society. The victims deserve no less than that.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. András Bársony, State Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Bársony (Hungary): I am deeply moved to be attending the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations dedicated to the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. I wish to take this occasion to pay our tribute, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Hungary, to the memory of the victims of the

Holocaust and all those who lost their lives in the concentration camps.

It is time once again to bow our heads before the millions of victims exterminated in the Nazi concentration camps. Our hearts go out to the families of the victims of the Shoah.

Today, we remember the enormous suffering of those who perished in the death camps of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Birkenau, Dachau, Mauthausen, Treblinka and many other places, where, in the name of a horrific ideology and policy, more than 6 million human beings were deliberately exterminated with extraordinary and evil brutality. Jews and gypsies, men and women, children and the elderly, sons and daughters of different nations, labelled as racially inferior, became innocent victims of a mad political system and ideology, causing immense loss for humanity.

Imre Kertész, the Hungarian writer and Nobel Prize laureate in literature, writes in his book, *Fatelessness*, about his shocking personal experiences of the human suffering and tragedies that people had to face in the concentration camps. The tortures, humiliations and losses were horrific and unlike anything previously witnessed. Mankind irrecoverably lost so many millions.

Freedom came too late for the nearly 400,000 Hungarians who were murdered in the concentration camps, thus raising the number of Hungarian victims of the Holocaust to 600,000. It was an enormous tragedy for Hungary, regardless of the religious, ethnic or cultural backgrounds of the victims. The loss of those individuals who perished in the concentration camps was and still is unbearable, and we must remain strong in our resolve that such crimes will never happen again.

It is a sad and painful truth not only that Hungarians were victims, but also that a number of Hungarians actively collaborated in committing those heinous crimes. Hungary as a State, and many Hungarians directly or indirectly, were cooperating with the Nazis who committed those crimes against innocent human beings, thus causing irreparable damage to our own nation and to humanity as a whole. That is the truth we must face day after day, even if we also know about the Hungarians — whose names are listed on the walls of honour in the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem — who saved the lives of Jews and helped persecuted or hunted persons, often risking their own lives.

Today's commemoration can indeed be a genuine, although most painful, tribute to the memory of the victims if we not only remember the human tragedy of more than 60 years ago, but also draw hard lessons from history in order to strengthen our determination and our actions to make sure that such horrors never happen again. That is our common responsibility.

My country, Hungary, after coming to terms with its own past, is more than ever determined to make sure that the darkest pages of history will not be forgotten and that they will never be rewritten. The Government of Hungary remains strong in its resolve to combat racial and ethnic discrimination as well as anti-Semitism. We also want future generations to have full and complete knowledge of the historical truth of what happened more than 60 years ago. The recently opened Holocaust Documentation and Memorial Centre in Budapest; Holocaust Remembrance Day, observed on 16 April in all schools and educational institutions in Hungary; and our determination not to allow any racial or ethnic discrimination, which can be the breeding ground for intolerable future actions, are among the efforts demonstrating that Hungary is willing and able to do its utmost not to allow similar tragedies to occur again. I am deeply confident that, together, we can and will succeed.

Before I came to this gathering, I was looking at the photo album of my family after the Second World War. There were empty pages, because I never had the opportunity to meet the members of my family who had lost their lives in one of those camps. Although I am honoured to speak before the Assembly, I would have gladly given up the opportunity to speak about and commemorate events for a chance to be in a familiar circle of those who lost their lives. I believe it is our common responsibility to ensure that those who have such an opportunity to speak out will never wish they could change their minds and that they can be with their families for a long time.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Max van der Stoel, Minister of State and Special Envoy of the Netherlands.

Mr. van der Stoel (Netherlands): Before the Second World War, 9 million Jews lived in the 21 European countries that were later occupied by the Nazis. In 1945, after the war, there were no more than

3 million Jews left alive in Europe. Almost 6 million had perished, half of them murdered or starved to death in the many concentration camps and death camps set up by the Nazis.

A similar number of political opponents, trade unionists, Roma and Sinti, Jehovah's witnesses, homosexuals, mentally and physically handicapped people and other so-called undesirables were also murdered by the Nazis, many of them in those same hellish camps. Very few survived the camps. Of my Jewish compatriots, 107,000 were deported; only 5,200 returned.

It is almost impossible now, in 2005 — as it was then, in 1945 — to absorb the truth and the systematic cruelty of the deadly Nazi system. For many, and in particular for the younger generations that did not experience the war, it may be tempting to forget. But if we forget, similar atrocities may all too easily occur. We have already experienced, and continue to experience, systematic acts of genocide elsewhere in the world.

"Never again Auschwitz" should not be a slogan, but a constant and continuous obligation for all of us: the older generation, who experienced or witnessed the horrors of the camps, and the younger generations, whose parents, grandparents, teachers and leaders should make sure that they are aware of the threat.

This commemoration — both the special session and the events surrounding it — should and will contribute to that. We believe it is extremely important that the commemoration is taking place under the auspices of the United Nations. That shows that it is a matter of concern not only for the countries and people who suffered under the Nazis, but for all countries and all peoples of the world. And it shows that the United Nations and the international community have a common responsibility — as laid down in the Charter — to work towards peace and respect for human rights. No one in the world deserves any less than that.

The Netherlands wishes to thank all those who made this commemoration possible: the initiators, the Members of the United Nations who endorsed and supported the initiative, President Ping and Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We express our deepest gratitude to all those countries and individuals who liberated the camps, but also Europe and other parts of the world.

The President (*spoke in French*) I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alpha Ibrahima Sow, Permanent Representative of Guinea, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): It is indeed a signal honour and privilege for me, in my capacity as Chairman of the African Group for the month of January, to convey to the Assembly the support and solidarity of the Group.

At the outset, I should like to convey our sincere gratitude for the superb organization of this special session of the General Assembly to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps.

The African Group wishes to pay tribute to the determination of the Secretary-General to convene this event of such great importance to the international community — one to which Africa attaches particular importance. It also stresses its appreciation for the praiseworthy efforts made by the countries that initiated the convening of this event.

The General Assembly, in commemorating for the first time the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, is reaffirming both its great devotion and its fidelity to the principles, values and objectives of the founding Charter of the United Nations.

Africa, through its involvement in this commemorative meeting, would like in particular to reaffirm its unceasing dedication to respect for human rights and the rights of peoples, to its staunch defence of the principles of human dignity and equality of all, regardless of race, gender, language or religion — a message of solidarity, tolerance and shared responsibility.

It voices its stand and its views with all the more forcefulness and conviction because its peoples, early on in the war, expressed their rejection of Naziism and fascism by firmly taking the side of the Allies with the goal of the liberation of both conquered countries and the Nazi concentration and extermination camps.

Africa, which had already experienced the horrors and humiliations of the slave trade, and which had embarked on that historic struggle to free itself from colonial domination, paid a heavy price in human life and in material losses to ensure the advent of a new

world based on the equality of rights of men and women as well as of nations large and small.

Sixty years later, the African continent, more than ever, is determined to work for the protection of human dignity and to ensure that the horrors of the Holocaust do not recur. Its troubled history has taught it that declarations of principle, no matter how noble they may be, are not sufficient. They must be applied and implemented if they are to make a difference.

Here, Africa, which has remained in the avant-garde of the struggle against apartheid, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, cannot limit itself to condemning the Holocaust and the other forms of anti-Semitism.

To ensure the protection and the systematic defence of human rights, African countries today are working to ensure respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are implementing the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of December 1948, as well as the other international instruments relative to those rights.

The African Group wishes here to welcome the observance by our Organization and the international community of the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, and to recall our gratification at the fact that the Secretary-General announced, during the important meeting held on that occasion, a plan of action for the prevention of genocide, which was welcomed by Member States and by public opinion.

The Group also welcomes the adoption by the Third Committee for several years running now of the resolution entitled, "Measures to be taken against political platforms and activities based on doctrines of superiority which are based on racial discrimination or ethnic exclusiveness and xenophobia, including, in particular, neo-Nazism".

The extermination of 6 million Jews in the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War will forever weigh heavily on the consciousness of humankind.

It is the hope of the African Group that the commemoration of the General Assembly of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps will serve as a framework for a deeper reflection on the lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust and will help identify the most appropriate ways and means to combat, throughout the world, genocide, crimes against humanity, serious violations of human rights and impunity.

At a time when the international community is preparing to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, a day of commemoration such as the one which is bringing us together here should crystallize our individual and collective determination to work for the effective implementation of the objectives of peace, security, development and of social and human progress, as legitimately set forward in the San Francisco Charter and the Millennium Declaration.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Ravan Farhâdi, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): In my capacity as Chairman of the Asian Group for the month of January, I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Asian Group, which includes countries of Asia and the Pacific. The Asian Group believes that that this commemoration by the General Assembly of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps is quite appropriate.

It is extremely important to remember history and to remind new generations of the atrocities and heinous crimes that have been perpetrated on the basis of racial segregation and of tyrannical ideologies and platforms.

Sixty years ago, the United Nations was founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote development and human rights. The States Members of the United Nations have, for the past 60 years, been engaged, with strong political will, in promoting the adoption of various conventions and in the holding of major international conferences on human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 were major milestones in the adoption of binding legal instruments. The recent entry into force of the statute of the International Criminal Court and the establishment of the Court to prosecute and punish, inter alia, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, are major developments in terms of deterring the kind of atrocities humanity experienced during the rise of Nazism 60 years ago.

Despite the fact that the statute has not yet been ratified by all the Members of the United Nations, legally and politically its entry into force is a major development.

While we are commemorating the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, it is high time to emphasize, on the basis of the lessons that emerged from that tragedy, the central role of the United Nations in ensuring a system of genuine global security, the promotion of human rights and the general progress of humanity in the face of the new threats and challenges of the twenty first century.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Stefan Tafrov, the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the member countries of the Eastern European Group, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this special session to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. Millions of human beings — men, women and children — were deported to those camps. Some survived, most perished. During this session we mourn that enormous loss for humanity and pay tribute to the memory of the victims.

We will never know how many future Einsteins there might have been among the children who died in those camps. Many of the victims were citizens of the countries of the Eastern European Group. For our nations, the tragedy of those years is a haunting memory and an enduring trauma. It has marked our collective memory forever.

The grim statistics of the extermination are staggering not only because of the sheer numbers of victims, but also because of the diversity of their ethnic origins, religious and political and professional backgrounds. Several minority groups found themselves targeted in a particularly relentless manner. What began with the burning of books by the Nazis was followed by the burning of synagogues and ended with the gas chambers. Approximately 6 million Jews were exterminated. The catastrophe of the Holocaust is a vivid example of the fact that when one minority is persecuted, all minorities are threatened and when all minorities are threatened, everybody is threatened.

Today we also commemorate the liberation of the camps, which was made possible by the bravery and heroism of the armies of numerous countries. We therefore pay tribute to those courageous soldiers who not only put an end to the unprecedented suffering but also revealed to the world the atrocity of the Nazi gas chambers and concentration camps.

As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of our Organization this year, we, the Member States, should never forget that it was founded in the aftermath of one of the most devastating wars of the twentieth century, at the very time when the existence of the Holocaust and the Nazi extermination machine had been brought to light. Succeeding generations have placed their hopes in the United Nations so as never to allow such a tragedy to happen again. The founding principles and goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter commit all its Members to protect human life and dignity and to ensure universal respect for human rights and freedoms as a foundation for peace, security and development.

For the member countries of the Eastern European Group, this commemoration is part of an ongoing effort to not forget what happened 60 years ago. The philosopher George Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The pitfalls of short-term, deficient or selective memory could lead to disastrous consequences even today. Remembering that political and, above all, moral, catastrophe is the best way to fight the evils of the present: racism and intolerance of all kinds, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism. We owe it to the memory of the victims of the Nazi camps, to the heroism of the liberators and to the future generations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Manuel Acosta Bonilla, Permanent Representative of Honduras, to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Decades have passed since the liberation of thousands of human beings who escaped a tragedy that must not be allowed to recur and that we are still trying to understand — a tragedy that, moreover, played a fundamental role in the creation of this Organization of the United Nations.

Since its creation, the United Nations has recognized genocide as an international crime. By General Assembly resolution 260 (III) of 9 December

1948 it approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which entered into force on 12 January 1951.

Given the importance of that Convention, I would like to mind its first two articles, which read as follows:

> "The contracting parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.
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> "... genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

We must recognize that, regrettably, in modern times genocidal practices have happened again. This commemoration is of highest importance because it permits us to remember and never forget such serious situations created by human beings for political, racial, ideological or religious reasons. In this spirit, Latin America and the Caribbean fervently appeal to the international community to continue to fight to prevent and eradicate those practices, which today are regarded as barbaric, and to act resolutely to combat them.

The creation of an international legal system and the establishment of the International Criminal Court constitute important stepping stones in the search to achieve that wish. As the Secretary-General said when he introduced his Action Plan to Prevent Genocide to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva,

> "We cannot afford to wait until the worst has happened, or is already happening, to sound the alarm. If there is one legacy I would wish to leave to my successors, it is an Organization better equipped to prevent genocide and able to act decisively to stop it when prevention fails".

Morally speaking, we cannot leave to our children such tragic and dark legacies of humanity.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States — on whose behalf I am speaking and which I have the honour to chair — congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over a special session of such importance in the history of humanity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. João Salgueiro, Permanent Representative of Portugal, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): We, the peoples of the United Nations, are gathered here in a special session to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, which took place near the end of the Second World War in Europe. The Nazi camps represent one of the most heinous crimes ever committed in the history of mankind. They were part of the deliberate policy of Hitler and the Nazis to annihilate Jews and to exterminate political adversaries and others considered socially or racially undesirable.

Concentration camps, forced-labour camps, extermination or death camps, transit camps, prisoner-of-war camps: all of these were at the service of the Holocaust. Dachau, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka and so many other camps throughout occupied Europe were a gallery of horrors that unfolds in our minds as we think about the events preceding the liberation of the camps. Six million Jews — roughly half of Europe's Jewish population and one third of the world's Jewish population — perished. Approximately 5 million other victims perished at the hands of the Nazi regime.

Today, our hearts and minds pay a solemn tribute to the memory of all the victims of the Nazi camps. We express our profound solidarity with the survivors. We express our sorrow for all those whom that outbreak of cruelty wounded in body and soul. And we honour in particular the Allied forces that fought to defeat Nazism, to liberate the camps and to give new hope to the world. Also deserving of our praise are the individuals who followed their conscience in helping to save the persecuted: rescuers like Raoul Wallenberg, Oskar Schindler, André Trocme and Aristides de Sousa Mendes, some of whom remain unidentified and unrecognized.

This is also a moment of meditation, a moment for humanity to raise questions: how was it possible for

this unprecedented tragedy to unfold? Why did things come to the point where man himself and entire peoples were brought so low? How can we keep alive the memory of the Holocaust in order to prevent something similar from ever happening in the future?

In that sense, the Second World War marked a turning point for humanity: the ashes of the war led to the birth of the United Nations and to hope for an international society built on tolerance, solidarity and common security. Out of cruel contempt for people's dignity and rights was born the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Portugal, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, wishes to call on the Assembly to renew once again its foundational vows, in particular to reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of all men and women and of all nations, large and small. Let us never stop learning from the past, and let us try each day, at the State and individual levels, to foster tolerance and respect for our fellow human beings. Let the United Nations wisely chart its course into the future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Wang Guangya, Chairman of the delegation of China.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation supports the convening of this special session of the General Assembly to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. The Government and the people of China have profound sympathy for the cruel fate suffered by the Jewish people during the Second World War, and we deeply mourn the tragic deaths by torture of 6 million Jews and other inmates of various nationalities in the Nazi concentration camps. Our hearts go out to their surviving children and families.

During the bitterly cold winter of 60 years ago, thick clouds of gunsmoke cast a pall over the entire world as the final battle was waged between good and evil, between light and darkness, between progress and reaction. In the thick of that winter, the Nazi concentration camps, which had butchered millions, were liberated at long last. Those who had survived the camps were able to emerge from the maw of evil and to begin life again. That January 60 years ago was an extraordinary page in the long annals of modern history; it witnessed the end of fascism's atrocities and the rebirth of hope in the aftermath of a long ordeal that had enguifed mankind. It is forever etched as a shining and solemn example in the hearts and minds of the survivors of the Nazi camps and the peoples of the world.

Sixty years ago, as Naziism raged through Europe, a militarist war of aggression was also subjecting the countries and the peoples of Asia to deeply humiliating treatment and to mindless plunder and slaughter. China alone suffered 35 million casualties at the hands of the militarist butchers, with the Nanjing massacre claiming 300,000 lives. In their concentration camps, the Nazis committed innumerable atrocities, but the militarists took no back seat to them in that regard; their crimes rightly incurred the wrath of all humanity and of heaven above.

With the passage of time, the world has experienced profound changes. The fascist war of aggression visited an unprecedented calamity upon humanity, but at the same time it had a sobering and educative effect on the world's people. Peace came at a heavy price; such tragic events must not be allowed to recur. To forget history would be tantamount to betrayal. As pointed out by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, we should not forget the past; rather, we should remember, reflect upon and draw lessons from history.

Yet today, 60 years later, the spectres of Naziism and militarism still haunt us, with forces and organizations from the extreme right still bent on distorting and denying historical crimes, in open defiance of human conscience. This can only cause disquiet and alarm to the international community. China's ancient wisdom tells us that past events remembered can educate generations to come, that history is our mirror and guide and that true courage comes with the awareness of shame. Today's special session is significant in two important ways. It not only serves to honour the memory of those who died in the Nazi concentration camps and to offer comfort to their families, but also reminds peace-loving peoples throughout the world that such tragedies should never again be allowed to happen. Good intentions are not enough. Efforts are required from all countries. We urge the countries concerned to genuinely assimilate the lessons of history and resolutely take the path of peaceful development.

Sixty years ago, the insightful visions and bold decisions of statesmen led to the birth of the United Nations amid the gunsmoke of the Second World War. Its founders declared, in the opening words of the Charter, their determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind", and "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the social and economic advancement of all peoples".

Today, preventing war, ensuring that tragedies such as the Nazi concentration camps never happen again, and promoting the common progress and development of humankind remain the primary responsibilities of the United Nations. The world is at a historic turning point, and the United Nations is at a crucial crossroads. The responsibility for ensuring the common future of humanity rests heavily on the United Nations, whose role must be enhanced, not weakened, and whose authority must be upheld, not compromised. This is in the interests of the world's people; it is a duty of the world's Governments; and it is a responsibility of the world's statesmen.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Chairman of the delegation of Jordan.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan): It is appropriate for the General Assembly to commemorate the victims of the Nazi Holocaust on this day marking the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz; to honour those victims who are living and remember the millions who were murdered; to honour the liberators of that infamous camp and of all the camps, and to reflect on the wickedness of those who perpetrated crimes so disturbing to the human conscience that they were waged, in the words of Henry L. Stimson, "against civilization itself".

Whatever judgement future historians will make about the twentieth century in measuring the sum of our technical, scientific and literary achievements, it will be a picture transformed by the Holocaust and the wider war of aggression waged by the Nazis. So extreme were their acts of cruelty and the consequent suffering of European Jewry, the peoples of occupied Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as of the disabled, the infirm and the weak, that we should expect nothing less than the contempt of future historians for how seemingly impossible it has been for humankind to be consistently humane or kind.

That is not to say that humankind is by nature malevolent to the point that cynicism must trump hope. Certainly not: after all, the millions of victims were themselves innocent and, throughout the worst brutalities, individual acts of great heroism and kindness were evident on the part of those who tried to save the victims — themselves often victims. Nevertheless, doubts will always exist about our essential nature and its stability — doubts which will not likely be removed unless we succeed in making genocide, aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity unthinkable by the end of this first quarter century.

For what sense can we make of a commemoration — this important commemoration — if our management of the legacy of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg remains chequered, at best?

In Nuremberg, human civilization identified itself, at last, most clearly and profoundly. For in Nuremberg, we loosed ourselves from a past overwhelmed by the popularity of simple retribution, where summary actions had often only left room for further injustice, and we pointed ourselves towards a future where justice was to be obtained for those bearing the greatest responsibility — the most notorious perpetrators — and victims alike, solely by means of a fair trial, with a verdict formed only on the basis of the evidence brought before the court. For the surviving victims, Nuremberg, of course, laid down the unassailable truth: a precise and detailed record of how genocide, and all those appalling policies levelled at the enemies of Nazi Germany, were drawn up by the Nazis and then put to terrible effect.

Over the past 60 years, and since Nuremberg, the thread of international criminal justice has passed through the Tokyo trial and the trials, famously, of Hess, Eichmann, Papon, Barbie, Schwammberger, Priebke and Hass, before finding extensive expression in the ad hoc Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda. Yet despite the important convictions, the laying bare of the truth, and the jurisprudence produced, all we seem to hear at present, in this Hall and in the Security Council, are complaints about the great expense of international criminal justice — with the combined budgets of the two Tribunals

approaching $300 million a year. When measured against the $900 billion the international community spends annually on weapons — that historic companion of war — surely a few hundred million spent on international justice — the surest companion of peace — is a worthy consideration.

Similarly, what sense can we make of this important commemoration when there are still many countries which have yet to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court? I take this opportunity to urge them to do so.

What sense can we make of this important commemoration when we, the international community, have on occasion allowed, and still allow, not only chauvinistic nationalisms to exist — leading often to violence against others — but also subsequent events to transpire unchecked? And what sense can we make of this important commemoration, when through our inaction we allow, year after year, one people to dominate another, to deny them many of their most basic rights and so, with the passage of time, also to degrade them as a people?

Surely, if we are to commemorate the victims of the terrible events that shaped the Holocaust with policies fitting to their memory — policies that do not promote or tolerate yet further injustice — our task must be to find once again the cooperative spirit that emboldened the world's leaders in 1945 to establish the United Nations, that very antithesis of chauvinistic nationalism, and to set about affirming the centrality of justice in the search for a lasting global peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rashid Alimov, Chairman of the delegation of Tajikistan.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The convening of this special session of the General Assembly devoted to the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation by the troops of the Soviet army and its allies of the prisoners of the Nazi concentration camps is unquestionably an event of particularly historic significance. It represents a tribute to the memory of millions of totally innocent people: Jews and Gypsies, Russians and Poles, representatives of dozens of countries and ethnic groups, including my compatriots, who were brutally reduced to ashes by the hateful death factories created by the criminal Nazi regime of Hitler. The souls of millions of women and children, old men and young people, swept up to the heavens by the burning fires of the concentration camps, today look down on the United Nations with hope that the horrors of the time of Hitlerite fascism will never again occur on this Earth.

Never, under any circumstances, can we allow that horrendous tragedy to be forgotten. The mournful tolling of the bells of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald, Dachau and Mauthausen — those bells tolling for the victims of Naziism — call upon us to be vigilant, and warn us against complacency and indifference towards anti-Semitism, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all other forms of intolerance. Here, as in the past, a central role must be played by the United Nations — a leader in the defence of peace, human rights and human dignity.

The remains of the concentration camps, which have been preserved to this day, the memories of the victims of Naziism, and the photographs and other documentary evidence of those ghastly times must serve as a stern warning to humankind. Present and future generations must know the truth about the monstrous brutalities perpetrated by the Nazis in order to prevent their recurrence.

The delegation of Tajikistan would like to express its profound gratitude to those courageous people present here who endured all the horrors of the concentration camps and who retained their faith in the triumph of humanism. Hitlerite fascism, with its ideology of selective superiority of some peoples over others laid down a challenge to all humanist human civilization.

The countries which founded the United Nations and which united against that evil paid a high price for their shared victory in the Second World War. The consolidation of our historical memory concerning the terrible lessons to be learned from that war is not only our duty to those who laid down their lives on the altar of victory or who were reduced to ashes in the Nazi concentration camps. It is not only the test of our moral maturity, but — and this is particularly important — it is a guarantee of our common determination to protect the future of humanism.

Anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia are not a thing of the past. Extremism, be it religious or political — and particularly when the two are combined — is a real problem with far-reaching consequences. Today, national extremists, skinheads and radical groups imitating young fascist thugs target

not only people of another skin colour, nationality or faith, but also houses of worship, cultural monuments and cemeteries. Any one of us could become a victim.

It is obvious that extremism can be conquered only through collective efforts by the international community, with the coordination of the United Nations. It is highly symbolic that one of the important results of the Second World War was the creation of the United Nations, which embodies the shared will of States to strengthen peace, justice and international legitimacy on Earth. The convening of this special session at United Nations Headquarters is yet one more reaffirmation of the Organization's dedication to the lofty principles and norms enshrined at its creation by the leaders of the States of the anti-Hitlerite coalition.

Tajikistan — a country devoted to the principles and purposes of the United Nations — together with other Member States, is ready to make its contribution to building a more secure, more just and more humane world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Alberto Arias, Chairman of the delegation of Panama.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Panama joins in the General Assembly's special commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. We commend this Organization, which was born out of the ashes of that conflagration, for pausing to highlight that event with due formality and a proper sense of history. It is a good opportunity to renew our commitment to the ideals on which this Organization was founded.

More than 6 million human beings — especially, and with particular violence, members of the Jewish people — lost their lives as victims of the insanity of some and the apathy of others. It was precisely the horror provoked by that mass murder that gave clear-cut and definite momentum to our present commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

The innocent victims of the Holocaust were citizens of many nations, and many States united to liberate them. Only through such vigilance and spirit of cooperation can humankind address the challenges that face us now and in the future. As we recall the liberation of the concentration camps, we should remember wherever intolerance is permitted, there can be discrimination; that wherever those in authority seek to be absolute masters of the truth, there can be persecution; and that wherever discrimination and persecution are combined, there is fertile ground for another holocaust. Just as in the case of the Holocaust of the Second World War, such events have a highly detrimental impact on the fabric of all peoples of the world, not just the victims, because discrimination, whatever its shape or manifestation, is an assault on the very essence of humanity.

Panama, a country where people of many races, religions and political persuasions live together in perfect harmony, hopes and trusts that we will learn from the lessons of the past, and that this will help us, today and in the future, to meet the challenges that face our civilization.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas, Chairman of the delegation of Belarus.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Just outside the capital of Belarus is the little village of Maly Trostenets. There, the Nazis built their fourth-largest extermination camp. There, the lives of more than 200,000 were extinguished. Tragically, not a single prisoner from that concentration camp saw the light of liberation. The Nazis totally destroyed that camp in an effort to cover up all traces of their atrocities.

The people of Belarus, a country that joined the last world war, lost one in four of its citizens. It has remained highly and deeply sensitive to the legacy of the war, and that legacy is very much alive. It lives on in our memory of the old men, the women and the children of 619 Belarusian villages who were burned alive by SS death squads. It lives on in our firm belief that peace is the highest value in life. Some may call that idealistic, but Belarusians are passionately anti-war.

That legacy lives on in our deep concern at the fact that in today's world the plague of hateful ideas, ideas of ethnic exclusivity and superiority, has not yet come to an end. It also lives on in our sorrow that over the centuries, the temptation of the great and the powerful every now and again to wage victorious blitzkriegs has not yet yielded to a realization of the simple truth that a flawed peace is better than outright conflict. Some might ridicule the common Belarusian

saying "Only let there be no war". Yet when we recall the unimaginable fate of the prisoners of Nazi concentration camps, we might try to look again at the wisdom of those people who may have low expectations of life but who are undoubtedly keenly aware that any peaceful solution is better than the horrors of war.

If the tragic lessons of the War are ever quietly are consigned to the oblivion of history, humankind will have failed the greatest major test of its humanity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Denis Dangue Réwaka, Chairman of the delegation of Gabon.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Gabon fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Guinea on behalf of the African Group in New York. However, allow me, on behalf of my country, Gabon, to pay tribute once again to the memory of the millions of victims of the Holocaust and, on this special occasion, to express the solidarity of our country and our people with all those that suffered the agonies of deportation and the barbarity of the Nazi concentration camps.

What words could be added to the gripping testimony we have heard today, which has made us shudder? The duty to remember is all the more vital for us today, when history sometimes threatens to repeat the horrors of those particularly dark times, which one might have thought gone forever: the spectres of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and more.

That is why this United Nations commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps has a universal impact and calls out to us more than ever. We must draw inspiration from the heroism of all those of various backgrounds who fought to liberate the concentration camps, to resist tyranny and to contribute through their sacrifices to the strengthening of democratic values and human rights.

We must build upon the progress already achieved through the action of the United Nations in order to ensure that humankind will never again have to suffer such atrocities.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Augustine Mahiga, Chairman of the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Guinea on behalf of the African Group in New York.

It is most appropriate that we, the United Nations, have convened a special session of the General Assembly to observe the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, which ended the horrible Holocaust in Europe. The Holocaust raged for years and claimed 6 million lives as the world watched helplessly. It took a world war to defeat the Nazi regime and to end the Holocaust.

Today, 60 years later, we should reflect with special care on what went wrong for so long. It is also a day for a special memorial to the victims and the survivors of the Nazi death machine. It should also be a time for a mea culpa and atonement for our collective failure to stop other acts of genocide that have taken place since the dreadful horrors of the Holocaust.

The systematic and widespread murder of the Jews did not happen by chance. Nor did other recent grave human rights abuses witnessed in the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda or the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. None of them should have happened, but they did. And in each case, they happened because people willed them, planned them and executed them. It is in that respect that reported human rights abuses anywhere in the world cannot be dismissed lightly. The enduring question we must ask ourselves is: Can it happen again?

The only sense of comfort we enjoy today is that never before has the international community shared a common sense of resolve to promote human rights and human dignity under the banner and leadership of the United Nations. Never before have States and their leaders shared such a sense of responsibility against the forces of evil and the indignities confronting humanity. In our region, that spirit of determination became the driving force behind the first summit of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which culminated in the Dar Es Salaam Declaration.

As a neighbour to Rwanda, we in Tanzania cannot but recall with anguish that the systemic planning and execution of the genocide, in which close to a million members of Rwanda's Tutsi population, as well as moderate Hutus, were murdered, was

bureaucratically organized, coordinated and executed. Rwanda must therefore serve as yet another painful reminder that the resolution "never again" can easily slide back to "again and again".

It is our strong belief that this commemoration will also serve to reinforce our dedication to the protection and promotion of the dignity and worth of the human being. That must also be our enduring commitment as we strive to promote better standards of life in larger freedom.

There could not be a better vehicle for the promotion of the fullness of the vision and ideals of the Charter than a wholesome pursuit of the rights advanced by yet another instrument inspired by the desire to prevent the recurrence of the atrocities of the Holocaust: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which covers civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Those basic rights, taken together, must constitute the bedrock of a comprehensive international normative regime for human rights.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Kim Sam-hoon, Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): My delegation joins other delegations in solemnly commemorating this sober historic and humanitarian anniversary. We mourn the victims of the Nazi concentration camps and we lament the tragedy of the Holocaust.

The Nazi concentration camps and the Holocaust represent one of the cruellest and most inhuman crimes against humanity. Millions of innocent lives were lost in a heinously premeditated and systematic way based on blind racial and political hatred. That tragic calamity underscores how racial hatred can lead human beings to commit horrible acts of violence against their fellow men.

Atrocities during the Second World War were not confined to Europe, with other regions of the globe also enduring massive human rights violations and forced brutality. It is the collective obligation of humankind as a whole to learn from history and to promote education and tolerance so that such a tragedy may never be repeated.

In the founding of the United Nations, the historical example of the Nazi concentration camps and other crimes against humanity during the Second World War weighed heavily on the minds and hearts of the international community. Various international humanitarian instruments were created out of the ashes of the genocidal crimes. Those include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. At the time, it was hoped that those instruments would help to prevent future genocide and crimes against humanity.

Unfortunately, and to our collective shame, the end of the Holocaust and the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps did not mark the end of genocide. Recent genocidal tragedies have reinforced the need for the international community to redouble its efforts to build a reliable and efficient collective security system that deters the recurrence of such heinous crimes and to promote tolerance among races, cultures and nations. If we are ever to break free of the hatred and violence that plague our world, we must begin by embracing the idea that all human beings are truly created equal and have the same inherent right to live in peace and security and with dignity.

What the Holocaust and the Nazi concentration camps taught us, among many painful lessons, was that man's capacity for inhumanity against his fellow man is immense. However, at the same time, examples of selflessness, compassion and understanding, as vividly shown by the prompt international tsunami relief efforts, remind us that humankind also has a limitless capacity for compassion and empathy. The challenge we now face is to harness that capacity for good while remaining vigilant against outbreaks of intolerance and hatred.

It is too late for the millions of victims of the Holocaust and other genocides, but not for future generations. The Republic of Korea honours the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and the Nazi concentration camps, and we pledge our unwavering support for the struggle to protect the basic human rights and dignity of all mankind.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg, Chairman of the delegation of Brazil.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is extremely important that the General Assembly should commemorate the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. We meet here today to honour the victims and

to keep alive the image of a tragedy that afflicted not only those who suffered its direct consequences, but all humankind. It is important that we pause to consider the historical significance of the events of 60 years ago.

With the liberation of the concentration camps as the Allies advanced on Nazi positions, one of the most ghastly chapters in history was laid bare: the death of millions of men, women and children, and in particular Jews, Slavs, Gypsies and the disabled, among other innocent people. The camps have rightly been portrayed as being among the chief institutions, if not the key institution, of the Nazi regime. Liberated by the Red Army, Auschwitz was a factory of mass murder and has become the symbol of the crime of genocide.

The Nazi regime, which sought total domination and was based on an absolutely repugnant ideology of racial hatred, was not content to discriminate against, segregate, persecute, confiscate the property of, or to arrest Jews and submit them to forced labour. In an insane spiral of denied rights and violence, defenceless people came to be executed in cold blood and en masse. The atrocities reached their most repulsive point with the setting in motion of machinery for the annihilation of millions of human beings.

Crowded onto freight trains, many died of suffocation during the journey. Upon their arrival, the majority were sent immediately to the gas chambers. Inmates were subjected to degrading living conditions and unspeakable horrors. The intention was to bring people closer to death than to life, torturing them and subjecting them to terrible medical experiments. The atrocities confound the imagination and cause the deepest concern on the part of all those who try to understand how such violence could ever have been committed.

The liberation of the concentration camps was the prelude to the defeat and overthrow of the Nazi regime. The Second World War, ignited so aggressively by Hitler, was nearing its end, and there was much hope that humanity might experience more peaceful times. Like so many other countries, Brazil had sent troops — 25,000 soldiers — and a fighter squadron to join the Allies in the European theatre of operations. Brazil had also been attacked with the torpedoing of many of its merchant ships in the South Atlantic. On the battlefield, hundreds of young Brazilians gave their lives for the common victory of peace and freedom.

The favourable political climate in 1945 offered the opportunity to reverse the moral collapse of previous years and to strengthen international law and institutions. The United Nations was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Sixty years later, countries and regions devastated by the world conflict enjoy peace and prosperity and have been able to contribute significantly to the maintenance of international stability, in conformity with the precepts of the Charter.

Moreover, the Organization has emphasized its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. It has been able to make considerable progress in building an architecture for the international protection of individuals, which began with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, setting the common ideal to which all peoples and nations should aspire. Recently, the International Criminal Court — the first of a permanent nature — was created to ensure that the most revolting crimes, including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, will not go unpunished. We must continue to make every effort to ensure the integrity, independence and universality of the Court. But we must acknowledge that grave and systematic human rights violations continue to be committed in circumstances that challenge the world's conscience.

We are concerned at the persistence of armed conflicts and at the growing numbers of civilian deaths, which bolster our conviction concerning the need to prevent such conflicts, seek peaceful solutions to disputes and ensure continued development in the field of international safeguards for individuals. Likewise, the international community must demonstrate its steadfast commitment to fighting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance. It must also make clear its political will to overcome problems such as hunger, poverty and disease.

We must never forget the atrocities of the past. The Nazi concentration camps were the scene of the complete destruction of human dignity. This special session of the General Assembly is an opportunity for us to reaffirm our legal and moral obligation to persevere steadfastly on the path to peace and the protection of human rights.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): Japan joins a large number of Member States in fully supporting the holding of this special session to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. We mourn the victims of the Holocaust. Humankind has long experience with the scourge of war. Twice in the first half of the twentieth century, the world again went through such horrors and experienced untold suffering, misery and sorrow. That must not be repeated. We must remember our past mistakes and learn from them, and we must recommit ourselves, in our collective resolve, never to allow them to happen again. This special session of the General Assembly should serve as an important reminder of that solemn determination.

As we look back upon the Nazi persecution that destroyed 6 million Jewish people and many others, let me take this opportunity to touch upon one episode that has come to be widely known among Japanese and Jewish people today. In the early days following the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, a Japanese diplomat, while serving at the Japanese consulate in Kaunas, Lithuania, issued more than 1,000 travel visas to Jewish people who had come banging on the door of the consulate in a desperate attempt to flee from the Nazi persecution. The travel visas allowed them to transit through Japan before going on to their eventual destinations.

What is remarkable about that story is that it took great courage for the diplomat, Chiune Sugihara — one of the people referred to as "Schindlers" by the Secretary-General this morning — to carry out that task, because, while Japan had adopted a non-discrimination policy towards Jewish people at the time, many desperate Jewish people in Kaunas failed to fulfil certain prior conditions — such as having immigration authorization in their countries of final destination — under which Japanese consuls were authorized to issue transit visas. Mr. Sugihara nevertheless issued those Jewish people transit visas on his own responsibility and out of sheer humanitarian concern. He worked frantically, day in and day out, until the very last moment before his departure from a train station in Lithuania in September 1940.

That diplomat's courage and humanism helped to save thousands of Jewish lives in those dark and difficult hours. Many people have remembered Mr. Sugihara and will probably remember him forever. I am one who feels very proud that there was such a person as Vice-Consul Sugihara among our predecessors. At the same time, I believe that that story also contains a lesson for posterity: the importance of humanism and humanitarian considerations in the conduct of international affairs.

The wisdom of the human being lies in his or her capacity to learn from the past. Our history must be the mirror for the future. Many previous speakers have addressed that lesson, which we fully embrace.

In that connection, some references have been made to the tragedies caused by the war in Asia. In that regard, I wish to recall the position of my Government on the matter. Allow me to quote from the formal statement made in 1995 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end. At that time, the Japanese Prime Minister, Tomiichi Murayama, with the endorsement of the full Cabinet, stated:

> "During a certain period in the not-too-distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the peoples of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake will be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology."

Repeated by all succeeding prime ministers and other leaders of our Government, this remains Japan's position on the issue.

I conclude by noting that this year the United Nations celebrates its sixtieth anniversary, and that next year, in 2006, Japan will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into the United Nations. The United Nations has come a long, long way since its inception 60 years ago, and so has my country, Japan, over that period of time. From one of the former enemy States at the time of the foundation of the Organization, Japan has long since become one of its largest contributors, in terms of both supporting many of its activities and meeting its requirements. Japan has thus shown itself to be a Member State with an undivided commitment to and faith in the ideals and objectives of the United Nations.

Let me state that we are proud of this record, and, at the same time, in all humility, we pledge to make our

utmost efforts to continue to promote international cooperation as a responsible member of the international community, and to work for world peace and development based on the principles and ideals of the Charter.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform members that there are still 11 speakers inscribed on my list. So that all speakers can take the floor this afternoon, I would appeal to all representatives to keep their statements as brief as possible, and I thank them for their understanding.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mihnea Ioan Motoc, Chairman of the delegation of Romania.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): I stand before you today, speaking on behalf of the Government of Romania, to voice the feelings of my compatriots, to express our sorrow and to pay our profound respects to the memory of the multitudes of people who, most of them simply because they were Jews, suffered and lost their lives in the Nazi concentration camps.

Today is a day of remembrance for the victims and a day for us to express our gratitude to those soldiers who made the nightmare and the evil of the concentration camps come to an end. We recall the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a milestone in the tearing down of the entire network of death camps.

It is only right to honour this day at the United Nations and only right to hold this special session of the General Assembly. We need to remember the past; we need to hold on to its lessons and to seek guidance therefrom for times to come.

Romania fully supported this commemoration at the United Nations. The Romanians, too, remember the years of Nazi terror, the time of the ideology that produced the infamous camps. Many Romanian Jews perished there. As the world was learning the full extent of the horror, Romanians, too, realized the full depth of the tragedy that had befallen their fellow citizens.

In emerging from the long shadow of totalitarianism and reintegrating into the community of democratic nations, the Romanians set out on a long and painful journey of recovering their memories and confronting the whole truth of those tragic years. Today, we in Romania believe that it is our duty to know and not to forget.

We believe there are responsibilities that we need to acknowledge and assume; we believe that we have to make a critical appraisal of history, so that the past, as it happened, is not forgotten, and that we can reconstruct ourselves as part of constructing our future.

The Romanian experience with its own Jewish community during the Second World War — the fact that fellow citizens were victims of the Holocaust — should not and cannot be forgotten or belittled. The tragedy unfolded against the background of dramatic events for the country and the nation. Those were times of profound turbulence for Romania. A radical change took place in the country's political regime, bringing to power, following a coup d'état, a pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic and anti-democratic party, the Legionnaire Movement.

It was then that crimes began to be perpetrated against the Jewish population in Romania. The most important chapter of Romanian participation in the Holocaust relates to the deportations of Jews from parts of Romanian territory to the concentration camp located in Transdniestria, a territory situated between the Dniester and Bug rivers, under Romanian administration during the Second World War. The history of crimes against Jews comprises other dark chapters, including the Iasi pogrom of June 1941.

In conjunction with several organizations of Holocaust survivors and the Federation of Jewish Communities from Romania, our Government established Holocaust Day in Romania to pay heartfelt homage to all those that suffered from the discriminatory, anti-Semitic and racist policies promoted by the Romanian State in the mid-twentieth century, in a turbulent time of our national history. By paying homage to the dead and the deported, to those obliged to leave the country, to those deprived not only of their belongings but of the rights and liberties guaranteed them by the Constitution, to those treated as inferior human beings, we undergo every year, on 9 October, a test of conscience and thereby try to understand the causes and the consequences of ignoring the core values and traditions of tolerance of our own people.

Moreover, the Government decided to assign the task of disclosing all the relevant facts regarding Romanian participation in the Holocaust to an international committee of specialized historians, chaired by Professor Elie Wiesel. The report recently

issued by that Committee will create the basis for any future investigation of that horrendous phenomenon, as well as for disseminating information to the public, especially as concerns the younger generations. The Ministry of Education and Research has included in school curriculums an optional course on the Holocaust.

Those measures are part of a broader programme promoting knowledge and understanding of our past and of events related to the Holocaust. It comprises the adoption of legislation forbidding fascist, racist, xenophobic or anti-Semitic symbols and organizations, as well as the cult of personalities bearing responsibility for crimes against humanity.

Romania now has a longstanding commitment to come to terms with its own past and an established record of international cooperation in researching the Holocaust. Last December, my country became a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. Romania will continue to implement programmes related to scientific research on the Holocaust, education for tolerance and protection of the Jewish cultural patrimony in a process that brings together governmental action and initiatives from civil society.

Coming to terms with one's own past — with all the good and all the evil — is an exercise in honesty and democratic conscience-taking. In condemning the perpetrators of the crimes committed, we should not forget that, even under the harsh political and military conditions of that time, many well-known, as well as many unknown, Romanians risked their freedom — even their lives — to save their Jewish fellow citizens from death. Some of those Romanians who stood up are now recognized by the Israeli State as "Righteous Among the Nations".

The Holocaust has a particular significance and lesson for today. It must not be repeated. We must therefore ensure that generations to come will still be able to learn and understand the whole truth. As Elie Wiesel recalled in *Night*,

> "Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed ... Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never."

That is why today's commemoration of the liberation of the Nazi death camps is so important. It is important that this day of remembrance is being observed at the United Nations, thus allowing a renewed message for the global community in order to capitalize on what we have achieved as humankind during these last six decades, and to make sure that such atrocities and tragedies never ever happen again. We are today reminded in a very powerful way of the need to further brace ourselves and to fight racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism more resolutely. Those scourges can never be treated lightly.

For all of us, this day must become a moment of recollection and reflection, a good time to meditate upon totalitarianism and its tragic outcomes, upon community ties and the values of human solidarity, upon the ways to ensure that democracy, legality and respect for the fundamental rights and liberties of all human beings will always prevail.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. César Mayoral, Chairman of the delegation of Argentina.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to say that Foreign Minister Rafael Bielsa was to have read out this statement, but for reasons beyond his control, he is unable to be here.

Through you, Mr. President, I wish to convey our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for having called for this special session to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

Memory arranges the trajectory of the truth. Memory follows truth, a few steps behind, and it is more patient even than those who are remembered, for whom truth is not always the greatest obsession. Memory is governed by other laws. It reads the riddles of water; it is spontaneous only when it speaks truthfully in private, thinking of the court that will judge the past and the future.

On 27 January 1945, 60 years ago, the vanguard of the Red Army stumbled upon the Auschwitz concentration camp. There, they found several thousand survivors who had been abandoned by the Nazis because they were unable to walk. The war was still raging, and deportees who were fit to work had

been transferred to other camps in mid-January, lined up in what became known as death marches.

Primo Levi, a beacon of reference for Auschwitz and the Holocaust, together with his friend Leonardo Debenedetti, at the request of the Russian commander of the Katowice transit camp, drafts a manual of knowledge on death — a form of Taylorism applied to extermination. That was the origin of their "Report on the hygienic and sanitary conditions in the concentration camp for Jews at Monowitz (Auschwitz, Upper Silesia)".

That bureaucratic title does not succeed in concealing the panic; the scientific style of writing is unable to silence the voice of horror: Truth would soon give meaning to the words. Levi and Debenedetti explained that, upon arrival at Monowitz, a concentration camp set up for the large-scale production of synthetic rubber, prisoners were taken to a disinfection unit where their heads were completely shaven. They were then taken to a shower room, where they were locked in until the following morning.

All those tired, starving, thirsty, emaciated men — aghast at what they had seen and anxious about their immediate future and the fate of their loved ones, from whom they had just hours before been brutally separated, their souls tormented by dark, tragic premonitions — had to spend the night standing in the water. At six in the morning they were rubbed down with a hygienic solution and were given a hot shower. Immediately afterwards, their bodies still damp, they were moved to another unit, walking barefoot through the snow.

Levi and Debenedetti explain what the word "cleanliness" in the camp: anyone entering a dormitory for the first time and giving a cursory glance around him would fail to notice that in the structure of the barracks, in the supporting beams, in the boxes containing the beds, lived thousands of bedbugs and fleas, preventing prisoners from sleeping.

But memory always goes hand in hand with truth. It keeps it moving forward; it prevents it from going astray, from losing its voice and falling silent for ever.

By September 1944, most of France had been liberated. But there were more than 2 million "absentees", as minister Henri Frenay called them: prisoners of war and, in much smaller numbers, deportees who had participated in the resistance, or "racials", as Jews were called at the time.

Jorge Videla, the leader of the 1976 coup d'état that devastated my country, was also very fond of word play. When a journalist asked him what he could say about the thousands of abducted persons who were beginning to be mentioned abroad, he replied that they were neither alive nor dead; they had simply "disappeared". Later on, it became sadly evident just how many people in our country had disappeared.

It is with the Eichmann trial, in 1961 — the Nuremberg of the Jewish people, as Ben Gurion called it — that the truth about the genocide began to take hold in public opinion and, then, in the public conscience. Even when pushed to one side, memory adapts to the truth.

However, at that time, in the media, Auschwitz did not yet represent the "final solution". In 1967, during the dedication of an Auschwitz monument, Polish Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz, a camp veteran, spoke of murdered Slavs, Poles and others from all the countries of Europe, but he failed to mention the Jews. The French pavilion at Auschwitz, opened in 1978, bears the inscription "The suffering and the resistance of the French people".

On 16 July 1995, Jacques Chirac uttered words that were definitive when he said that France bore an inescapable debt to those who never returned from Auschwitz. On 27 January of this year, the sixtieth anniversary of the Russian army's entering the Auschwitz extermination camp, President Chirac will open a new exhibition in the French pavilion, in which the responsibility of the Vichy regime and the role of Auschwitz in the Shoah will be acknowledged as central issues in the current reflections on the Second World War: memory and truth.

The will to remember shapes our destiny. Early in the Nazi occupation of France, Béatrice de Reinach rode on horseback every morning in the Bois de Boulogne together with German officers. She was the daughter of the last of the Camondos, Count Moïse de Camondo, last in the line of a distinguished family of Levantine bankers who had settled in France at the end of the Second Empire. She was the sister of Nissim de Camondo, a hero of the First World War who died for France in 1917. More Israelite than Jewish, and protected by the shadow of her martyred brother, this self-assured woman trotted on horseback, concealing

under her riding clothes the yellow star the Jewish Statute forced her to wear. Perhaps she believed that, if necessary, Marshall Pétain would come to her rescue and grant her the certificate of "honorary Aryan" — something which would save many other notable Jews. In the final weeks of 1942 she was arrested for not wearing the yellow star. In 1943 she was interned in the Drancy camp. In November she was deported to Auschwitz. When the camp was liberated in 1945, she was not among the survivors.

Memory, will and truth come together on 27 January 2005, the sixtieth anniversary of the revelation of Auschwitz.

In a very profound aphorism, Kafka speaks of the past and the future as rivals of the present. The present, says Kafka, is pursued relentlessly at its origin by the past, while it struggles against the future, which halts its progress forward. But it is not just those two rivals — the past and the future — but also the present itself that are at issue. For who truly knows the intentions of the present? Be that as it may, the dream of the present is that one day, at a time when we least expect it — a time when the night is at its unprecedented darkest — it will suddenly step out of the line of combat and, on the basis of its combat experience, take on the role of the judge that can make decisions about those two rivals, the past and the future. That day has arrived. That day is today.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor next to His Excellency Mr. Joël Adechi, Chairman of the delegation of Benin.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): We associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Guinea on behalf of the African Group.

Sixty years ago, the world discovered the true face of Naziism through the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, the site of a horrendous crime against humanity. That discovery enabled the international community to truly grasp the dimensions of the Nazi crimes. We pay tribute to the memory of the many victims of those crimes, in particular the thousands of Jews who died in the extermination camps.

Present and future generations owe an infinite debt of gratitude, and must pay tribute, to the men and women who fought against Naziism, many of whom paid with their lives for their heroic commitment to the relentless struggle against Naziism and the Hitlerite State on the various fronts that it opened in an attempt to dominate all of Europe and the rest of the world.

Naziism is a rejection of the inalienable principles on which modern society is founded. Those principles, on which the United Nations is based, are respect for life and the value of the human person, equality of the rights of individuals and peoples and the right to self-determination, regardless of gender, race, language or religion. The key idea here is the safeguarding and advancement of human dignity.

The Charter enshrines those principles as the basis for peaceful and friendly relations among States. Those principles embody the shared values of humankind; they are the essential criteria that set the standard for a State's membership of the community of democracies.

The seriousness of the abuses perpetrated in the concentration camps continues to resonate. The United Nations has therefore rightly undertaken the task of protecting and advancing the cause of human dignity and the inalienable rights of all of the peoples of the world.

We welcome the action of the Organization in the area of the codification and implementation of international instruments to protect human rights. In that regard, the United Nations has shown outstanding perseverance and determination in the victorious struggle against apartheid, colonialism and the general effort to prevent genocide and other practices incompatible with fundamental human rights and freedoms.

We pay tribute to the personal commitment of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, in particular that of Mr. Kofi Annan, under whose leadership the Organization has taken positive steps to combat impunity, inter alia through the establishment of international criminal tribunals and the creation of the International Criminal Court.

All States Members of the United Nations share a duty to be vigilant — the obligation to do everything possible to prevent the re-emergence of ideologies and regimes that embody and try to implement such philosophies, thereby flouting respect for human dignity and human rights.

Our world and our consciences must no longer accept inhuman and degrading practices based on racism and anti-Semitism. We must remain vigilant in order to ensure that tyranny, barbarism and discrimination based on ethnic origin, religious conviction and political affiliation cannot succeed.

In that context, commemorative ceremonies, such as today's, have particular significance. I pay tribute to those States that took the positive initiative to request the convening of this special session. This session provides us with an excellent opportunity to give thought to a time that does not reflect well on humankind. The international community must preserve the memory of the victims of Naziism, for to forget would be the most effective way of allowing a repetition of that bleak chapter in history — the Holocaust of the Jews and those other holocausts that preceded it.

We must continue steadfastly to prevent assaults on human dignity. The United Nations must remain at the forefront of the international community's efforts to protect and promote human rights. It must act with unshakeable faith in the capacity of the human race to improve, to remedy its shortcomings and resolutely to serve the ideal of humanism, which is its ultimate goal.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Stanislas Kamanzi, Chairman of the delegation of Rwanda.

Mr. Kamanzi (Rwanda): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this solemn and fitting special session of the General Assembly to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Guinea on behalf of the African Group in New York.

The Nazi-perpetrated holocaust was one of the darkest episodes in human history, when man's inhumanity to his fellow man resulted in some of the most gruesome and unspeakable crimes wrought against a people because of their national or racial identity. The Nazi killing machine systematically and methodically set about wiping out an entire people in Germany, Austria, Poland, France and beyond. When the concentration camps were liberated at the end of the Second World War and the horrific crimes of the Nazi killing machine were plain for all to see, it was clear that the world would never, and could never, be the same again.

The Organization to which we all belong, the United Nations, was formed to, among other things, ensure that the world would never experience the kind of horrors the Nazis inflicted on the Jewish people throughout Europe. Indeed, the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations expresses our collective determination to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another. Those international commitments were strengthened by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide — both historic documents, adopted by this Assembly in 1948. They recognized that the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, and the fact that disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind.

Despite those international commitments and obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, however, the world was reminded again of man's incredible capacity for inhumanity against his fellow man and the odious scourge of the crime of genocide more than 50 years later — in Rwanda in 1994, where, over a period of three months, more than 1 million people were slaughtered.

Today, as the Assembly stands united in its reaffirmation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, it should also take stock of the failure to prevent genocide in Cambodia, Rwanda and the Balkans. Questions need to be asked about what caused those failures if we are to learn from the mistakes of the past and ensure that they do not occur again.

Crucially, my delegation believes that, within the context of current discussions on the reform of the United Nations, the issue of the prevention of genocide must be given serious attention. The fact that genocide has occurred in at least three different parts of the

world within one generation should be enough to compel us to give the matter our serious attention.

We must ensure that the United Nations has a well functioning and well-coordinated early warning system in place to prevent future genocide. We must also ensure that the Security Council is not polarized or in any other way rendered ineffective in addressing such crises.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's appointment of a Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide at the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Rwanda genocide last year. It is, however, critical that the Office be given a clearer and more robust mandate and significantly greater resources in order to fulfil that mandate.

Finally, the Assembly and the international community as a whole must stand united in categorically rejecting as offensive and unacceptable any organization or individual that professes an ideology of genocide, hate, racism or discrimination. All such groups must be fought and isolated with the same resolve with which the Nazis were confronted 60 years ago. Neither the passage of time nor attempts by some of those groups to present themselves as legitimate political actors should shake our resolve to fight them and their odious and destructive ideology.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Baki Ilkin, Chairman of the delegation of Turkey.

Mr. Ilkin (Turkey): We are gathered here today on a solemn occasion to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. It is indeed a historic event. Turkey therefore welcomes the convening of this special session of the General Assembly.

The Holocaust, which was beyond doubt one of the worst forms of crimes against humanity, claimed the lives of 6 million Jews. The overwhelming majority of them died in concentration camps. A great number of people from other countries, including Turks, also lost their lives in the factories of death. Today, we pay tribute to all who perished in those camps. The closure of the camps brought a sigh of relief not only to the liberated Jews and others but also to their liberators and to all freedom-loving nations. It was a pity that liberation came too late and for too few. Nevertheless, the liberation put an end once and for all to the fear, suffering, torture and death of innocent people, who were persecuted and murdered solely because of their ethnic or religious background.

It was under such tragic circumstances that the United Nations rose out of the ashes of the Second World War. Today's special session also enables us to recommit ourselves to the fundamental principles and noble goals of the United Nations. Only through mutual understanding, respect and tolerance can we build a better world and a brighter future for all and thus prevent the repetition of such a tragedy and catastrophe.

Throughout its history, Turkey has been a shelter, safe haven and second home for the oppressed and the persecuted. It has been host to numerous ethnic groups, cultures and religions. That is how it developed a deep-rooted culture of tolerance, conciliation and coexistence. In all international forums, Turkey has always taken a firm stance against all forms of racism, intolerance and xenophobia, including anti-Semitism. Turkey will continue to work for the eradication of all those scourges.

Yet, on this occasion I will confine myself to saying a few words about the Jews who have found a second home in our country. During the Inquisition, more than 500 years ago, Sephardic Jews took refuge and found safe haven in our country. Ever since that time, they have been living and flourishing in Istanbul and contributing to Turkey's cultural diversity.

Likewise, during the darkest days of the twentieth century, the pre-War and the Second World War era, Turkey once again offered a safe haven and welcomed Jews trying to escape Nazi persecution. A good number of them took part in the process of the reorganization and modernization of Turkish universities and in areas such as city planning, construction of infrastructure and medical research. During the Second World War, Turkish diplomats serving in occupied Europe helped hundreds of Jews escape oppression and death by issuing them Turkish passports and identification cards. I was very touched by the Secretary-General's reference this morning to Mr. Selahattin Ülkümen, one of those Turkish diplomats.

Drawing the necessary lessons from the Holocaust, we should make every effort to combat all types of prejudice and hatred in all its forms and manifestations, be it anti-Semitism, Christianophobia

or Islamophobia. Our meetings today must help us to refocus our energies in that direction.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. John Dauth, Chairman of the delegation of Australia.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): Sixty years ago, nations around the world succeeded in defeating a barbaric and tyrannical Nazi regime — so graphically described this morning by Elie Wiesel — which had been bent on the systematic eradication of the Jewish people and the violent repression of many other races, nations and social groups. The peoples of the Allied Powers came together in common cause to defend the ideals of personal freedom and national independence, concepts upon which the community of nations was becoming increasingly based.

Young Australians, in their tens of thousands, answered the call to defend those principles, their country and Australia's allies. Sadly, more than 39,000 of them would give their lives, just as so many had more than 25 years earlier, when Europe had stood in flames. We are very proud to have played a significant role in the wider Allied war effort, and we must never forget the sacrifices that Australians and our allies made in the cause of freedom.

We are particularly proud to have provided a new and welcoming home after the war for so many of the survivors of the camps. We greatly value their substantial contribution in helping create an ethnically diverse, yet harmonious and tolerant, modern Australia.

The Australian Government did not hesitate to join the call to convene this special session because, as Elie Wiesel so eloquently put it, this solemn gathering is an occasion to listen, to remember and, we hope, to learn. We cannot — and we must not — ever forget the millions of innocents who perished because of hatred, irrationality and indifference. As we reflect upon the crimes of the past, let the testimony of those who lived, as well as the memory of those who perished, serve to guide and inspire us in pursuit of the goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter: to safeguard our peoples from the scourge of war, to preserve and advance fundamental human rights and to provide justice, social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on Her Excellency Ms. Imeria Núñez de Odremán, Chairwoman of the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Núñez de Odremán (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today we are recalling a shameful chapter in the history of humanity. The delegation of Venezuela, inspired by the democratic and humanist principles of the Bolivarian revolution and in solidarity with all peoples, wishes to express on this sorrowful occasion our categorical and firm repudiation of the acts of extermination that took place in Europe during the Second World War.

Fortunately, on the European continent there are at present significant democratic forces that are opposing the resurgence of Naziism and its xenophobic, racist, discriminatory and ethnocentric manifestations, which threaten democratic institutions and human coexistence on the continent. Of course, those forces also exist in other latitudes and regions of the world. Our revolutionary people and Government fully identify with the position of those progressive sectors, on behalf of the global interests of humanity.

Accordingly, the revolutionary Government is continuing the tradition followed in Venezuela since 1939, when the country's Government and people granted territorial asylum to a group of Jews who had been the victims of Nazi persecution in Europe. Since then, that group — and later those who became what is now Venezuela's Jewish community — has lived free from harassment, threats and oppression, in peace and harmony with their fellow citizens for the past 60 years.

However, the perverse political exploitation of the crimes that occurred during what is called the Second World War by imperialist States and their allies to conceal the atrocities that they have been committing against peoples and nations is an affront to the victims of the concentration camps.

That is why it is necessary to point out the link and the historical continuity between the war of aggression aimed at world domination that took place between 1939 and 1945 and the war of conquest that the United States of America and its current allies, endowed with strategic resources, have been waging against the nations and peoples of the world from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. We must bear in mind that the Second "World" War was an

anti-imperialistic conflict and a war to liberate the world's peoples, in which the former Soviet Union played a significant role. That war to liberate the world's peoples was the main cause of the defeat of fascism and the liberation of those who escaped extermination in the Nazi concentration camps.

Finally, we believe that, for the sake of humanity and justice for the world's peoples and in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, we should add to the collective memory of all human beings and to the United Nations agenda the sad memory and rightful commemoration of the holocaust of the Japanese people at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the crimes against the Vietnamese people from 1970 to 1975, the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the extermination of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994, and we must stop the current massacre of the peoples of Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq and other countries, without forgetting the indigenous peoples of Latin America and other regions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Anthony Andanje, Chairman of the delegation of Kenya.

Mr. Andanje (Kenya): I should like at the outset to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Guinea on behalf of the African Group.

Today we are gathered here to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. The Nazi camps of the Holocaust remind us of how fragile humanity is. We are left to learn from the mistakes — or the deaths — of others. Those events, and the pain that we experience every day, should serve as a guide to help us learn about the Holocaust. We know that the tragedy was much greater and went much deeper than torture or loss of physical life; it was a loss of spirit and self. This anniversary is an opportune time to reflect and take stock.

The atrocities took place while the world watched. The systematic pattern of extermination, made complete by the international community's lackadaisical response, has duplicated itself, replete with pain, agony and mass murder, in Cambodia, Rwanda, Kosovo and elsewhere. We have always been slow to act, and we have always acted too late. The consequences have been predictable.

As a community of nations faced by fresh threats and challenges, we must reassert ourselves in a new collective security consensus. We should never shy away from any trouble, and we should never be sceptical or undecided. There are things that people do not want to know; sometimes we are afraid to venture deep into a dark past. Our complacency and reticence, bordering on complicity, can cost us irretrievably. Elie Wiesel has stated that "to remain silent and indifferent is the greatest sin of all". I could not agree with him more.

We should never be satisfied, making ourselves comfortable, knowing that there are thousands of our brothers and sisters who suffer for lack of the barest necessities of life. Although our main concern is to look out for ourselves, it is appropriate to ask the age-old question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is regrettable that that question has never really been answered in a way that is satisfactory to civilized society. We are our brother's keepers, and if your brother is in trouble, so are you. A quotation from Martin Niemöller was cited earlier; however, I should like to quote the full text. As he put it succinctly:

> "In Germany, they came first for the communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up".

Let us recognize that individual commitment to a group effort is what makes a team work, a society work, a civilization work and the United Nations work.

We live in a time marked by unparalleled instances of genocide, ethnocide, mass violence and violations of fundamental human rights. It is imperative that a greater understanding of the psychological, cultural, political and societal roots of human cruelty be developed. We need to continue to examine the factors that enable individuals and groups to perpetrate genocide and the effect of the apathy of bystanders.

While an exact predictive model for mass violence may be beyond our comprehension, we have an obligation to strive to develop a model that

highlights the warning signs of genocide. With such information, we can develop policies, strategies and programmes designed to counteract such atrocities and prevent Sobibor, Auschwitz, Belzec, Rwanda and Kosovo from haunting us.

The first step towards preventing the human tragedies that have befallen the world today is to submit and commit ourselves to the various treaties and conventions and to the array of international legal instruments that protect fundamental human rights. Secondly, even in the face of extreme provocation, we should practice tolerance and patience. Thirdly, we need to cultivate and inculcate within ourselves the culture of prevention and aggressive diplomacy. Even in a world where there are competing conceptions of international unity, diversity and ethnic identity, we must steadfastly allow integration, preservation and assimilation to reign supreme. Lastly, we need to use value-neutral methods of data collection and interpretation to ensure that research findings promote an accurate, not stereotypical, view of racial and ethnic groups.

Finally, I would like to state that we would not have celebrated this important event had nations not come together and decided to pursue a common agenda. No single nation could have accomplished that feat. As a community of nations, we must stand together, for we know all too well that together we stand and divided we fall.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on Mr. Tim McIvor, Deputy Permanent Representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McIvor (New Zealand): New Zealand stands alongside other Member States in remembering with deep sorrow the victims of Nazi genocide.

The enormity of the Nazi Holocaust makes it appropriate that this special session of the General Assembly is being held to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Hitler's concentration camps. New Zealand was one of the countries that requested this session.

The Holocaust occupies a special place in global consciousness as the ultimate act of man's inhumanity to man. The sheer scale, callousness and deliberation behind Hitler's "final solution" makes it stand out from other acts of genocide that may have exceeded it in absolute numbers of deaths.

New Zealand fought alongside the Allied nations in liberating Europe from Nazi tyranny. New Zealand was one of the first countries to enter the global conflict started by Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, and participated until the end.

About 140,000 New Zealanders served in overseas theatres during the Second World War, and more than 11,000 of those young men and women did not return home. For a small nation, then numbering less than 2 million people, that was a huge death toll. New Zealand suffered the highest number of fatalities per capita of any nation in the British Commonwealth.

New Zealanders fought and died thousands of miles from home in the hope that their sacrifice might help prevent future acts of war and genocide.

Sadly, that hope has not been realized. All too often in recent history, human beings have continued to show the capacity to inflict death and destruction on each other. We have not delivered ourselves from the scourge of genocide. The massive loss of life and the memory of those brutally killed in the Nazi concentration camps require us to do so. All of us have a responsibility to prevent genocide and to fight against its causes. We have a responsibility actively to promote tolerance and understanding, and respect for those of different race, religion and colour. We have a responsibility to fight racism and anti-Semitism. As an international community, we have a responsibility to ensure that those who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity are brought swiftly to justice.

New Zealand hopes that, as we reflect on this historic occasion, the United Nations can commit itself anew to ensuring that the horrors of the Holocaust are never again repeated. For we have not yet learnt the lessons. We have seen the killing fields of Cambodia and brutality against fellow human beings in conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda and Darfur. We must do more. Preventing genocide must be the highest priority for this world body in the years ahead.

We must work to ensure that such events as the Nazi genocide do not happen again.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Chairman of the delegation of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): My delegation warmly welcomes the initiative which has brought

about this special session of the General Assembly commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps by Allied forces.

It reminds us, too, of the roots of this Organization itself, of its noble goals and of the political will that is still needed to prevent such horrors from ever happening again.

Today we contemplate the consequences of intolerance, as we recall all those who were targeted by the political and social engineering of the Nazis, elaborated on a tremendous scale and employing deliberate and calculated brutality. Those considered unfit for society — the Jews, the Slavonic peoples, the Roma people, the disabled and homosexuals, among others — were marked for extermination; those who dared oppose the regime by word or deed — politicians, religious leaders, private citizens — often paid for their opposition with their lives. Conditions were so designed as to make human beings lose their essential dignity and divest themselves of every vestige of human decency and sentiment.

The death camps were also witnesses to an unprecedented plan for the deliberate, systematic extermination of a whole people — the Jewish people. The Holy See has recalled on numerous occasions, with a sense of deep sorrow, the sufferings of the Jews during the crime now known as the Shoah. As one of the darkest chapters of the twentieth century, it stands alone, a shameful stain on the history of humanity and upon the conscience of all.

During his visit to Auschwitz in 1979, Pope John Paul II stated that we must let the cries of the people martyred there change the world for the better by drawing the right conclusions from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In a century marked by man-made catastrophes, the Nazi death camps are a particularly sobering reminder of "man's inhumanity to man" and of his capacity for evil. Nevertheless, we should remember that humankind is also capable of great good, of self-sacrifice and altruism. When natural or human calamities strike, as we have seen even in recent weeks, people display the best side of human society, with solidarity and brotherhood, and sometimes at personal cost. In the context of today's commemoration, we need only think of those courageous people from all walks of life, many of whom have been recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations". All peoples of the world are capable of great good: something often achieved through education and moral leadership. And to all that we should add a spiritual dimension, which, while it must not give false hope or glib explanations, will help us to maintain humility, perspective and resolve in the face of terrible events.

May all men and women of good will seize this solemn occasion to say "Never again" to such crimes, no matter what their political inspiration, so that all nations, as well as this Organization, will truly respect the life, liberty and dignity of every human being. With serious political will, humankind's moral and spiritual resources will surely be able, once and for all, to transform our respective cultures, so that all the world's peoples learn to treasure life and promote peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have now heard the last speaker in the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 7.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President (*spoke in French*): We have now come to the end of the twenty-eighth special session of the General Assembly. I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the twenty-eighth special session

The President (*spoke in French*): I declare closed the twenty-eighth special session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.